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Using global trends as catalysts for city transition

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Abstract

Urbanization process is triggered by population growth and technological advancement. Cities are accumulating global dynamics, gathering flows of people, energies and consequent risks. As a result, our habitat is facing a rapid transition [1]. City can use opportunities of momentum, planning and acting in response to the events or it can miss the chance, losing in the global competition. There is a considerable interest in finding, what influences city's prosperity. Global trends and the socio-demographic evolution are recognized as main overall powers. This study examines how these forces stimulate cities and how to employ them in a development process, in order to achieve a successful city transition.

Searching for essential elements directing towards inclusive and successful city transition, the urbanization is studied. Global processes influence cities significantly with individual, different outcomes, what is examined in case study part. Case study provides cross sector analyses of three European cities, basing on national statistics, international and local databases.

The study indicates that global forces and local conditions are of similar significance for city development. Case study illustrates divergence of outcomes generated by global forces. Therefore, a difficulty in building common approach, as there is no generic challenge-response. However, by identifying and mapping trends and patterns, inclusive and context-dependent strategy can be created appropriately, contributing to overall sustainability.

While creating development strategies and future visions is a common practice, it lacks tools to identify the context-dependent factors. Specific conditions and patterns of city development are built in longtime perspective and the social short termism often counteracts improvement. To work with the overall forces city needs to recognize its unique situation. The current stage of urban development differs from city to city, what allows to make transferable learnings and stop repeating the same steps on the development path, regardless of their evaluation.

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1. Introduction

The nature and impact of global powers, also called megatrends, is studied by many institutions. Currently, there is a focus on approaching global issues coherently on all levels of urban planning and governance. Global, international entities provide with overall analysis and set the policy direction, which is later pursued on national, regional and local administrative levels. The challenge for the local practice is to follow overall directions, respecting the local preconditions, taking into account city's individual potential and limitations. Strategic planning tries to respond to this challenge, however there are many examples, where development objectives are set incompatibly, or with local settings either with global objectives.

This paper begins by providing a brief on background information in the researched topic, including review of literature and definitions. Next part describes the outcome of case study, which investigates the global and local factors and their dynamic in three European cities. Study concludes with setting the guidelines for planning practitioners. Main sections of the paper explore the concept of megatrends and examine how they work and influence cities, outlining the key aspects.

The purpose of this paper is to deepen the understanding of the interplay of the local – global and to help the local planning respond to international call for the inclusive and sustainable practices. Research indicates how to use the power of global forces as opportunity to build the local strength and resilience in accordance with the context. The overall goal is to inspire the practitioners to see trends and forces as opportunities and as catalysts for city development, not only as challenges to address, mitigate or overcome. There is a huge power coming alongside global processes, which, when recognized and skillfully used, can make a quicker, easier, more effective way towards a successful city transition.

1.1. Changed urban dynamic

Cities, the most complex, fascinating and beautiful systems created alongside human evolution, the predominant sign of civilization. In Europe, it is around eight thousand years since human started to build his habitat in an organized way of the first *polis*, *citadele* or *castra romana*. This continuous process keep evolving and cities are growing in size, and in power. They gather the majority of people [2], consume and generate energy. All recent shifts, inventions and innovations, the technical evolution and facilitated human mobility, accelerate the mechanisms of urbanization. As much as good, this development provides bad impacts. Cities “have also been the source of much pollution and disease”, generating “environmental impacts to incipient crises in food, energy and water availability”, influencing social condition and economy [3]. Results of population growth and urbanization pushed planning and governance to focus on strategies for more sustainable future. Cities, due to the concentration of people and activities, gained particular attention. The efforts made today are mainly directed to restore the natural environment and minimize, future and already accumulated, negative impacts. “The choices made during the current wave of urbanization will have a huge and likely lasting impact on sustainability (...)” [2].

Cities are often growing independently, being connected or disconnected with their local geographies and global networks [4], they are alike the business entities, competing on a global scale [4,5,6]. Good planning and management solutions are of great interest, as cities goal to be successful, attractive and competitive. While in the past, cities were established and grew in their own rhythm, today the local agenda is confronted and challenged with global dynamics and flows [7].

1.2. Addressing global powers

In the era of globalization, advanced communication and transportation technologies, there are overall processes and forces that affect the whole globe, called megatrends [8,9]. “Three primary forces: technology, globalization and demographic change give rise to a range of megatrends” [10], which set the direction of the urban development. With many variations and different intensity, those overall tendencies affect human environment. Characteristic of

megatrend is that it can be recognized on a large, mainly global scale, where it shapes the social, economic and environmental settings [8,9]. Cities are operating on this field of global powers, networks, dynamics. Megatrends give rise to global tendencies in society and provoke the development of new activities. They can be identified alongside the emergence of new concepts and terminology such as smart, organic, wellness, positive psychology, sharing, crowdfunding, social platforms, mobility, intensive usage of technologies, the most prominent characteristics of modern urban life [11,12].

Global dynamic also generates challenges for cities, among which we recognize the costs of urbanization density [13]. Climate change as primary issue is addressed in many development plans with for instance fossil fuel free agenda and smart city concept. Under the pressures and concerns, there is a need to find and implement practices that will help to rethink, reevaluate and reuse what we have, cultivate the city as a great achievement and a hub of modern human, which is able to last and carry the positive values of urban life. With the rising urban population and sustainability objectives, “to ensure the high quality of future cities, massive investments will be needed” [14]. Lot of resources are employed to face and ameliorate the situation and figure out “right” actions. However, here comes a huge challenge for planning as for the difficulty to evaluate what the “right” action in these uncertain and dynamic times would be. It is extremely difficult to act with the interplay of issues and under the time pressure. Strategic planning tries to respond to this complexity and gives a rise of new discourse in planning and policy approach. A large number of studies, reports and papers call for an inclusive response to the challenges generated by global shifts.

The main objective of this paper is to point out that planning governance and practice may direct efforts and action to the positive transformation of cities, using the global challenges as the impulses to improve, and turn the threats into opportunities. Effective and coherent planning on global and local level, may result in sustainable, successful outcome. Therefore, comprehension of global processes and their dynamics, as well as strategic planning, are pointed out as crucial in order to address the recently raised complexity of city planning.

2. Case study. Examining results of global trends

Case study examines global trends in the local context of case cities. The assumption here is that there are differences and similarities in the impacts and the intensity of global trends, and the goal is to detect and analyze them. Study also takes into consideration the existence of patterns in the urban development, resulting for instance from West-East and North-South gaps in Europe and the tendency to Americanize [8,9].

Basing on the three cases: Lodz (Poland), Milan (Italy) and Copenhagen (Denmark), the study analyzes the path of urban development. The criteria for choosing case cities was dictated by the goal to make an in-depth examination of representative, characteristic for Europe urban nodes and make some universal points in findings, useful for other European cities. Therefore, three prominent regions of Europe are represented by case cities as follows: Eastern Continental - Lodz, Poland; Scandinavia and Baltic Region- Copenhagen, Denmark; Mediterranean area - Milan, Italy. The choice tries to cover the European area and concentrate on the most common size of the urban form [2]. The study is divided in two parts, first part includes detailed examination of each city separately, regarding the following areas: geography and location, historical inclinations, urbanization level, economic performance, mobility and transportation, demographic composition, current strategies, plans and investments, transition in governance. The detailed review bases on the statistical data and city reports, policies and prospects, and it gives a clear picture of the specific of each city, indicating its different situation. Full description of this cross sector analysis may be found in previous study [15]. Understanding each case city storyline, allows to move to the second part of the study, explored in this paper. It examines how the specific global trend is expressed in each case city, what situation it provokes and how it is connected to the previously built development trajectory. This investigation aims to understand and describe the relation of local and global dynamic.

In order to relate the impact of generic megatrends [16,17] with case cities, population statistics are examined. Population growth is a powerful megatrend, considered and addressed in development plans. It has large implications on the world we experience currently, dominated by the urban dweller [2,4]. The analysis is based on national and regional population statistics, and future projections, summarized in charts. Population analysis is further discussed in the broader perspective, employing previous in-depth multi factor study of case cities.

2.1. Similar megatrend, different effects in case cities: Lodz (PL), Milan (IT), Copenhagen (DK)

Europe is already highly urbanized today and 83.8% of the population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050 [18]. Especially middle-size cities are gaining in importance, as they have potential and capacity to grow [16]. Rising global population has various implications on spatial dynamics and distribution in case cities. We could expect that as a natural effect of global population growth and rising urbanization rates, the population of case cities is growing respectively. In fact, we observe that the global growth is not necessarily reflected in a straightforward way.

The following part examines population trends in case cities since the end of Second World War. It points out some of the local economic, social and spatial aspects, which may be viewed both as causes and effects of the population flows.

2.1.1. Lodz, central Poland

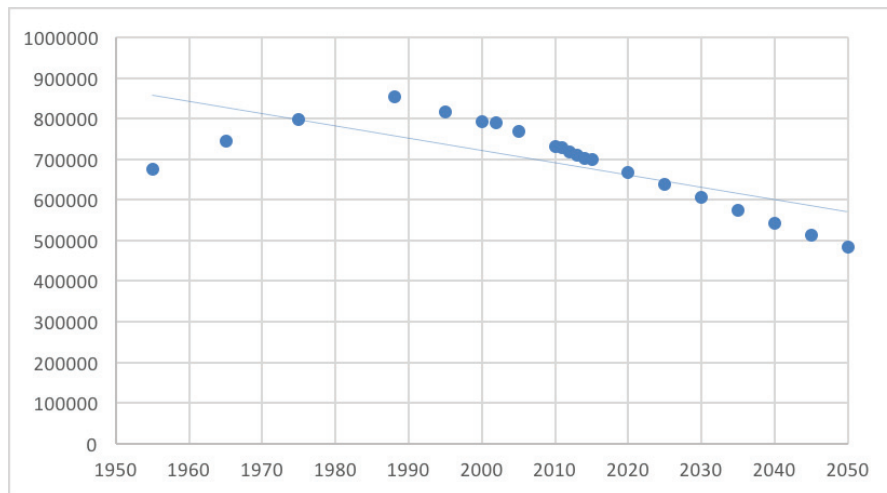


Fig. 1. Lodz; population trendline /population in years/

Lodz [Łódź] is the third biggest city in Poland, regarding the number of population. It is the capital of the administrative region of Lodz's Voivodship, area covering 18,219 km² in central Poland, with the main indicators at levels: urbanization 63%, unemployment rate 14,1%, net migration rate: -1598 [19]. Currently, Lodz has 707 504 permanent residents and dropping (Fig.1). Due to the industry decline, the city is being compared to Detroit [21]. Accelerated sprawl, recognized as one of the most urgent planning issues, is apparent in the city of Lodz, causing a "doughnut effect" [22, 23]. Population of Lodz's metropolitan region is around 1.4 million. Total population of the city is declining since 1988, when it was around 850 000. Constantly dropping, it reached 707 500 in 2014 [19] and is predicted to decline to around 600 000 until 2030 [20]. However, depopulation severely affects mainly the city core, the situation in the whole region is not far better. Lodz experiences outflow of inhabitants, probably in the direction of nearby country capital, Warsaw and other more attractive European destinations. The decline is provoked by the poor economic situation (GDP 63% of EU average per inhabitant [22]), but it is also a result of a mismatch of job market and highly educated youth [24].

Since 1988 the city notes the constant decline in population (Fig.1), struggling with the self-aggregating problems, such as lack of identity and coherent strategy. Scale of population decline is enlarged by temporary emigration, especially among the youth. As the shrinking tendency continues, the allocates resources in huge investments. City development is mainly driven by large-scale European Union financial programs. Among recent,

facilitating the car transportation takes the first place in the city's agenda, with national road and city belt projects. There are many other investments in the transport sector. In 2012, new terminal of the regional airport has been opened with the goal to move the depressed economy. While airport brings significant loss to the city's budget every year, the next huge investment is ongoing. Mid-size central train station, which has never experienced to be overcrowded, was turned down to give room for the multilevel underground station, twenty times bigger than the formerly existing one. The large capacity designed for the future, is probably calculated addressing the global population growth. Has the global trend been considered regarding local circumstances? Presumably not.

2.1.2. Milan, Lombardy, Italy

The city of Milan gathers more population inflows. No doubt, it is the location of the city at the European map, which has very positive inclinations on the city development. Positioned in two major geographical areas of urban Europe, Milan is a part of Blue Banana region and Pentagon [25] together with London, Paris, Munich and Hamburg, delimiting the zone which offers strong global economic functions, high income level and well developed infrastructure. Milan metropolitan area concentrates economic activities and prosperity. Milan is ranked as an Alpha global city [4], serving as an important linkage of the major economic region into the world economy, engine of growth for Italy and the gateway to the local and global resources.

Huge part of current Milan's success is a result of its historical development but Milan also struggles with the urban planning processes [26,27]. Major international investments of Pirelli, Alfa Romeo and the fashion industry drew economic growth. Also here, alike in Lodz, at the end of 20th Century, the prominent period of industrial boom passed. The post-war development of the city was hampered by the ineffective and incompetent administration. "The story [of planning in Milan] is that of the difficult quest to find an effective method of planning this area which lies at the vibrant heart of the Italian economy (Balducci, 2001) [26]".

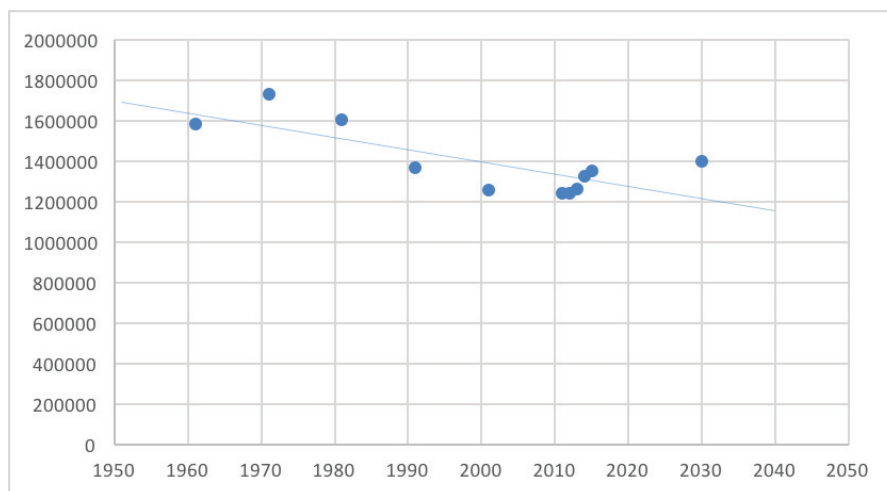


Fig. 2. Milan; population trendline /population in years/

The social composition of the city, where around one fifth of the residents has foreign nationality [28], and around 6 million tourist visits the city every year, illustrates heterogeneous social structure. This results in the flourishing culture but also with an unbalanced income distribution. The Gini Index of 0.51 in the area, causes social tensions and apparent disparities [22]. Milan is a heart of Italian development in economic, political and administration areas. City is cultivating business and tourism, service-oriented functions, basing on strong historical values and global recognition in a fashion and design industry.

The administrative area of Milan (Comune di Milano) has more than 3 million inhabitants and the whole Lombardy Region almost 10 million inhabitants (Fig.2). Total net migration rate at the level of 32,4 [28], indicates the city's growth. Although the highest migration indicators in Italy are observed elsewhere, at the southern parts in Catania (34,8) or Sardegna (Olbia-Tempio city: 38,8), due to international immigration in-flux, Milan stays the destination for higher educated youth from south of Italy and middle-aged international employees. Milan agglomeration stays stable in number of residents because of the shifts in its spatial distribution. Milan region is growing as the private housing moves to peripheral small towns, well connected to the city core. In this way, giving space for increasing service and business activities, and therefore, new investments in the city center. How much of this shift is an effect of planned actions, and how much is just a natural process, dictated by the housing preferences of affluent residents?

2.1.3. Copenhagen, Capital Region, Denmark

Copenhagen is the biggest city in respectively small country of Denmark. This domination is fostered by its special position of the country capital, which gives Copenhagen functional and governmental privileges, surplus of flows and activities, also regarding international operation and tourism. Having particular environmental limitations to spatial growth, the city developed the over-bridge connection with nearby Swedish city of Malmö, which as much historically as currently, serves as an important linkage between Central Europe and Scandinavia. This quite small in area and population capital, is a center of many internationals, what makes Copenhagen an important economic hub in the Northern Europe [29]. Its welfare and prosperity is an outcome of trading history as well as a specific of Nordic culture, which is community and common-good oriented.

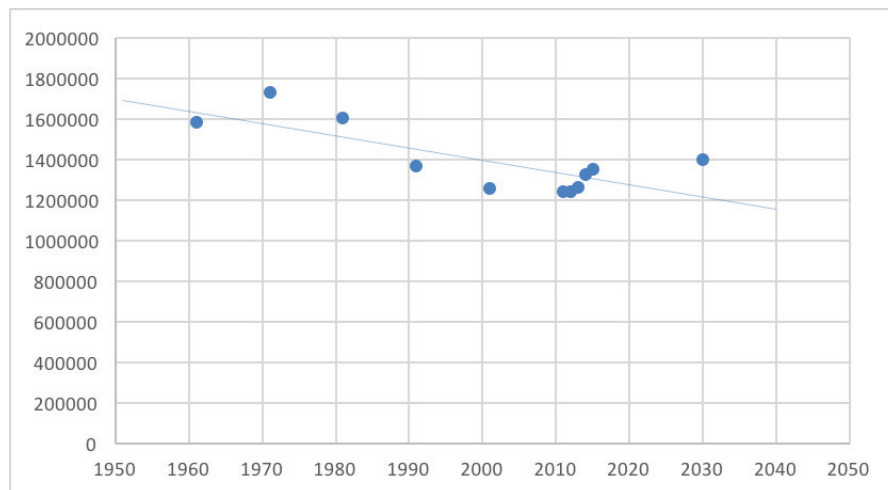


Fig. 3. Milan; population trendline /population in years/

Also in this case, alike Milan, the natural location gives implications for development and economy. Trading, shipping and fishing are enhanced by the coastal location, driving business and industrial activity, being important factor in shaping city's welfare. The city is a seat for business headquarters of Danish companies and multinationals, what improves its rank in the global network [30]. Prominent Danish companies, such as Mærsk or Carlsberg, define city's identity. As a result of trading history, banking sector and business-related education are cultivated. Young business is currently focused on ICT, publishing and culture activities, however the sectors of architecture, design and construction, pharmaceuticals, research and innovation are growing. Recent popularity of venture investment creates very good market for startups, led by the high demand for smart, green solutions and further technical innovation, boosting the creative industry. Venture capital is recently rapidly developing sector in Denmark, due to

the country general affluence and high incomes. However, main sectors driving prosperity are still trade and transportation, wholesale and retail, consultancy and services, such as advertising, entertainment and tourism. This multi sector economy successfully drives the development and sustain the welfare state of residents.

The total number of city's inhabitants is a bit more than half a million, 580 184 in January 2015 [31], which makes Copenhagen respectively small European capital. There is an interesting urban phenomenon, as for the small total population of Denmark, Copenhagen itself accommodates around one tenth of total country population. City's region "Storkøbenhavn" gathers almost one fifth of Danes and the Capital Region "Hovedstaden", more than one third of total national population. This concentration is a special characteristic of Copenhagen, rather unique in European setting.

Population of Denmark is constantly very slightly growing with changing population growth ratio around 0.3 ratio over last years, currently slowing down to 0.24 (Fig.3). City's population follows the national and regional trends and from the 90's, when noted a severe decline, recovers and grows steadily. The city and region migration influx is an outcome of internal and external movements. The composition of Copenhagen's society is very vivid, with almost one-fourth of population, having foreign origins. The immigration to the Capital Region has been rising from 30 000 to almost 40 000 over last six years [31].

Copenhagen planning focuses very much on environmental issues. With adaptation plans and famous cycling culture, it is being successful in approaching climate change. City management quite accurately uses the potential of the location and natural inclinations to achieve only a moderate growth, with incentives mainly to provide the best conditions for the current residents. Copenhagen does not pursue the rapid growth, having rather balanced migration policies, which regulate the recently boosted overseas inflow. The city, as much as entire country, has been able to sustain the welfare state for many years. Today's investments are located in education and innovation, enhancing mainly young motivated newcomers to settle down and contribute to the city's productivity. Planning policy is balancing the changes and navigating towards sustainable, environment and human-friendly development. Similar tactics may be observed in other affluent capitals, such as Vienna or Amsterdam. Are the history and culture the main factors shaping today's Copenhagen? Or is it the good planning and policy that makes use of them, as a result, making this modern capital one of top ten best European cities to live [32].

2.2. Case study result. Diverging effects of megatrends.

We observed three different spatial and social dynamics in analyzed cities. Lodz experiences depopulation, Copenhagen is growing moderately and Milan is primarily changing its functional and spatial distribution. A couple of following remarks summarize the case study part.

Cities all over the globe make an attempt to address common global issues, at times irrespectively of their local conditions. The successful examples of pursuing sustainable development, such as Copenhagen climate adaptation or Milan regional strategy, indicate that using the local potential in approaching global issues brings about positive results. There are common tendencies in a development of cities, such as decline of industry (Milan, Lodz, Turin, Manchester), depopulation of city center (Milan, Lodz), shift towards car free areas (Copenhagen, Milan and Oslo), the importance of climate adaptation (Copenhagen, Stockholm, Bristol), the importance of balanced economy (going away from one sector-dependence and enhancing regional cooperation). These tendencies, which can be found in cities all over Europe, illustrate variety of methods in approaching global shifts.

Secondly, the global population growth is in Europe expressed in diverse social dynamics, mostly changes in social composition and distribution, not so much in raised total numbers. Some research points out declining density, which gives rise to sprawl and decentralization, among vital spatial results of demographic change in urban areas of developed countries [33].

It is interesting to observe that in all three cases, the population trendlines do not follow the global and European population growth at all [22]. We may instead see that there is a growing tendency in last years in the city of Milan and Copenhagen, due to the sinusoidal pattern, that may be found on the graphs. Both cities are currently in increasing phase (Fig.2,3).

Economic situation, which is often a key focus of policy, depends upon people, “(...) human capital and skills are most certainly indispensable to urban growth (...)” [34]. The economic situation of studied cities is of course connected to the bigger picture on regional and national scales, and it depends equally on global and local role of the city. Copenhagen as a capital, has a great advantage with respect to development potential. Both Milan and Lodz, are capitals of their regions, but while Milan is the second biggest and the most affluent city in Italy, Lodz heads a poor region, suffering from the misused proximity of Warsaw, country's capital. This local context is necessary to be included in the strategic planning, it confirms the dependence of on ground interrelations, irrespective of city's great independence and importance of global networks [4].

Conclusion from having studied case cities that regardless of global trends, every city is currently in a different situation, what gives different prerequisites to work with global pressures. There is a trajectory of each city development shaped by the collection of its former actions, historic development. This trajectory is challenged by global trends and gives unique for each city settings. Result of case study shows that the overall population growth has various implications on case cities and the population trend is diverging, depending upon many local factors. Therefore, we may conclude that all the global trends will also produce diverse results, depending on the city specific, shaped by its unique development path. Findings confirm the assumption, demonstrating that generic megatrend gives various impacts for each city, depending on its specific situation at the moment.

2.3. Role of population statistics

The focus on population data is intentional, as population dynamic carries the picture of the overall situation and other sectors. Population change is one of the easiest to track urban trend, assuming that we have reliable data. Population dynamic affects spatial distribution, transportation, energy and food demands, reflecting economic situation. It can be used as a base to sketch the city's development trajectory. This is because people are responsive towards the changes much more than structures and systems. Their choices more than any other factor, reflect the collective condition of a region and the city. It is people, who drive economy, their creativity and productivity, the city uses for its development [34, 35]. Plans and strategies are directed to attract residents and provide for them. In the current mobility times, it is essential to have a good overview on population flows, by systematically collecting accurate and timely data [36]. The data built usually on the “static” statistics of the registered residents, should today be more precise, able to follow and represent the temporary flows, such as outflows of exchange students, or inflows of seasonal workers and tourists. Hence for some cities those impermanent flows actually build the permanent characteristic.

As population reflects size, scales, economy, and its trendline indicates the path of development, it may be used to create a development scenario because, as argued, population data is able to bare other aspects of urban development. Having sketched the population trendline we can extend it to see potential future development. Despite the unpredictability of the future, observing the historical population graphs, we can learn that unless the rapid event, the population trajectory is going rather smoothly. Knowing the projection, city can start to build strategy, start to plan. In order to be more effective and use the opportunities of momentum, it is wise to make use of other cities' actions. Comparing the trendlines and paths, city can recognize other comparable cities. The ones that have been going through or are currently facing, similar situation. Recognizing their practices, city can learn from and use them. It is of vital importance however, to transfer the solutions wisely, avoiding the common copy-paste practice, as transferring of knowledge and responses, requires critical evaluation and adjustment to local context.

3. Global trends as a process

Global trends influence the world and shape the future. They are formed by a sum of all minor actions and triggers, and they are not fixed, but constantly changing. This process is similar to the water cycle in the atmosphere. The global environment, gathers results of many individual factors, and produces some common “situation” in the atmosphere, which gives rise to different weather conditions in different locations. As a result, we experience wind, rainfalls or droughts (Fig.4). Outcome of megatrends, works similarly, producing a variety of site-specific experiences: challenges, pressures, impacts. The manifestation of global trends in spatial, economic, demographic form depends entirely on the local conditions. They act as a determinative factor that can be compared to the

geographic location of a city, when we apply the understanding showed in the concept of megatrends cycle (Fig.4). This explains that urban challenges and their intensity are fully context dependent. Various outcomes of megatrends produce site-specific challenges, pressures, impacts that are awaiting suitable action. In this cycle, it is also to underline that actions, footprint of every city are next once again influencing the entire system.

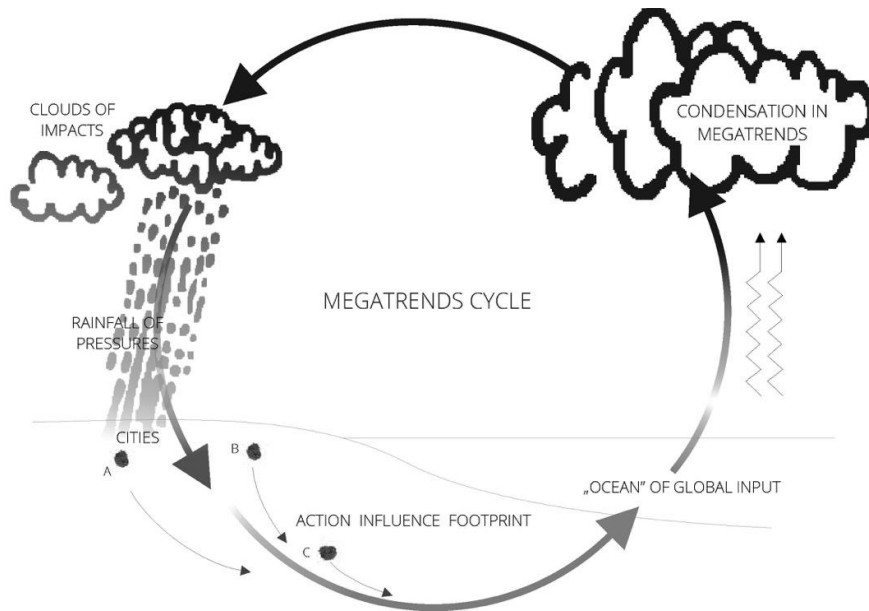


Fig. 4. Megatrends as a cyclic process

The manifestation of megatrends in urban environment, depends on local circumstances, such as history, geography, political and economic situation, as well as culture and demography of a place [8,9]. Understanding the mechanism of megatrends process, we can easily see that when one city acts to the best of its abilities, it naturally contributes to the overall improvement on global scale. Therefore, the starting point is to discover the local potential in relation to global forces, and use it as a catalyst for future transformation. Timing is of great importance, as the constantly changing global field requires constant evaluation, often adjustments on the way. Strict, asset-oriented strategies are not a desired approach. On the other hand, the process oriented planning, which allows flexibility and designs a margin for unpredicted events, is applicable.

Because megatrends may be used as positive driving forces of development, it is crucial to recognize them and use for building development plans. The importance of these global powers is reflected by the concerns of many large research and consultancy entities, which emphasize that there are as many positive, as negative results of megatrends. Recent environmental, economic and social concerns resulted in rethinking the priorities of future development. Today, sustainable growth and development is a main objective of United Nations Agenda [38,39]. City acts to reach the sustainability, livability, resilience goals, under the external pressures and with the motivation to improve. While global trends are being identified and described by institutions, and available in reports and documents [8], it is an important task for each city alone, to recognize its unique characteristic and basing on past, project and sketch its development path accordingly. On the canvas of the local prerequisites, the city can address the global challenges by working on its local scale. Understanding how the overall trends are formed, is key in this process (Fig.4). It is a massive work to recognize and map all the characteristics that shape the city development and make scenarios for the future. Building reliable databases on population, economy and other sectors helps to draw a picture of past and current inclinations. Addressing global issues, city ought to understand, what prerequisites it has to act, and how to use its unique local potential.

4. Empowering cities to act: addressing results of global trends with the local planning agenda

City is a generator of the innovation, trends, knowledge and its role is to lead the global transition, directing towards improvement [14]. In a current transition times, a period of transformation [1], the changes we experience are the outcome of ongoing processes, in which city planning and governance perform. But the dynamic goes far beyond the boundaries of one city, therefore the importance of cross-border cooperation. Regional and international partnerships goal to set the direction for the future development in a coherent and inclusive way. In general, most contemporary cities need to face and address similar issues, such as social cohesion and integration in more and more diverse urban environment, flexibility in adjusting to population changes, management of labor market, food, water, energy, security issues, and of course the environmental concerns [2,3,14,39,40]. These global issues underlying cities' development have to be taken into account with the same attention as the local circumstances [14].

4.1. Transferability of solutions

In globalized world, planning practice is under the risk of non-contextualized approaches and methods. While it is good to have common development objectives, the methods to pursuit them need definitely to be contextualized, as they depend on local conditions. Despite the distinctiveness of every city, patterns can be detected in how cities evolve over time. Cities go through similar stages of urban development. Basing on comparable data, such as population trends, analyzing development over time, we recognize analogies in the shifts and experiences of cities. We may use these analogies to make learnings and exchange the experience-based knowledge.

If we aim to improve and achieve positive transformation, we need to first understand the storyline of each city separately and analyze how on this specific ground, megatrends work. There is no one-fits-all solution, though the development strategy is unique for every city, as for national, regional and inner-country differences. The necessity to act accordingly to the local context shall enhance cities to create a differentiated strategy that takes into account the city-specific conditions, potential and limitations. Strategic planning enables to be prepared, ready to face uncertainty of events and stay adaptable. From reporting, documenting on and evaluating actions, we can create a matrix of causes and responses, and observe in a long term perspective, how effective they are. While there is an ongoing change, our privilege and opportunity is to influence this change, navigating its course in a desired direction. Therefore, the conscious active posture and strategic planning have a key role in transition times [1]. Urban transition includes changes at every level of the human habitat – city functioning, climatic, behavioral aspects, structural and landscape transformation [37]. The successful development strategy is necessarily based on the knowledge of both global and local, understanding of which gives immediate awareness of possibilities to develop. The choice of right tools for action and methods to work may be later made from the range of learnings inspired by actions of other cities or theoretic knowledge. Moreover, analysis of similarities, differences and patterns, makes us realize the advantages that arise from the development gaps and inequalities over Europe, which we normally perceive as negative characteristic. In fact, we may use them as a great potential. When we critically evaluate the past and make learnings, we might benefit from those disparities on a development path.

5. Conclusion

The view on urban development presented in this study, calls not only for an inclusive approach but also aims to empower each city to act. It goals to explain that the energy of global powers may be utilized as a kind of booster, a catalyst of the city transition. Each and every challenge or force, may be seen as energy that city shall work with and use for its benefits. There is no fixed result of common powers, as we could observe in the case study, and city has a great margin to operate within the projected development scenarios, it is in position to determine the results. Complexity of global-local dynamic results at times in a discouraging deduction that irrespective of local efforts, the city will experience negative consequences of global changes. On the contrary, understanding how the overall processes work, gives the rise of the conclusion that every single city is extremely powerful. The local actions determine, what the city will experience in the future, and moreover they contribute to the global picture, what is a good motivation for planning and governance practitioners. This understanding indicates the importance of affecting collective global input.

For assessing current and future needs with respect to urban growth, and for setting policy priorities, systematic tracking of changes and trends of urbanization is indispensable [16]. Monitoring, and evaluating the events and actions is a fundament of future action plans [41]. Governments, with the support of international cooperation, should continue their efforts to produce more extensive and better quality data on the local conditions and global changes. Inclusive approach leads to inclusive action, which in this context calls for using “the local” in approaching “global”.

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